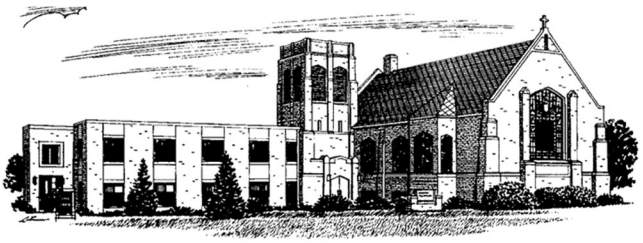
SARON MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

Saron Evangelical Lutheran Church (ELCA)
510 Main Street
St. Joseph, Michigan 49085



Website: www.saronlutheran.org
Email: info@saronlutheran.org
Phone: 269-983-1273
Facebook:www.facebook.com/saronlutheranchurchst.joseph

The Rev. Joan Oleson, Pastor
Home: 269-983-2475
Email: oleson@saronlutheran.org

Marcus Roll, Music Director
Email: roll1mc@gmail.com

Irma Gorman, Organist

Amanda Bradley, Admin Assistant
Cell: 419-306-5780
Email: info@saronlutheran.org
bradley717@gmail.com

Megan Savage, Bookkeeper
Email: financial@saronlutheran.org

Sara Porter, Childcare Specialist
Email: portersara20@gmail.com

Typical Sunday at Saron:
Fall, Winter and Spring:
8:30am Worship On-Location
9:40am Learning Hour for Ages 3-Adult
11am Worship with Zoom Option
Nursery Available

Summer of 2023 (beginning May 28):
10am Worship
On-Location and via Zoom
Nursery Available
No Learning Hour

We hold in prayer:
The Rev. Elizabeth Eaton,
Presiding Bishop, ELCA
The Rev. Dr. Craig Satterlee, Bishop of the
North/West Lower Michigan Synod, ELCA
The Episcopal Diocese of Western MI

Our Companion Synods:
Christian Lutheran Church of Honduras
Lutheran Church of Papua New Guinea
Lutheran Church of Latvia
Saron's Mission: *Joyfully sharing God's love for all!!*

PASTOR JOAN'S ARTICLE FOR APRIL 2023

Alleluia! Christ is risen! Christ is risen indeed! Alleluia! As I write this, we are approaching halfway through the Easter season - 7 weeks, 8 Sundays, 50 days. I think that sometimes we forget that it is more than just a day's celebration. Rather, it is a season of bright rejoicing, a celebration that rejoices in Christ's victory over death and ultimately, its power. The alleluias continue to be sung often, the bells ring, the festive candles burn as we celebrate the season and the approaching festival of the coming of the Holy Spirit, on Pentecost (May 28.)

Within this season of rejoicing, I am reminded of all the joy that comes in this new life that Jesus gives. (You can find fuller details about these events throughout the newsletter.) Let me name a few - new and returning folks to worship, an abundance of little voices that run joyously up to the children's sermon and participate by twirling banners and ringing bells, baptisms, confirmations, the blessing of our graduating seniors. There is the progress being made with our Fortify & Fly projects, accessibility in our worship space, and a planned celebration for paying off our mortgage and the success of our Capital Appeal. And I know many look forward to the summer months when our schedule changes and we meet together as one. Let this be not a time of boasting in ourselves, but boasting in the God who is working in our midst, bringing life and salvation to a world so in need. Alleluia! Christ is risen indeed. Alleluia and Alleluia!

NOTE: Schedule change is coming soon!

-Pastor Joan

Blossomtime Grand Floral Parade Pre-festivities Picnic on May 13

Saron intends to provide hot dogs, chips, cookies and water, beginning at noon and until we run out. Open to anyone. A free will offering will be taken to help with expenses. Join us!

General Information

OFFICE HOURS

Pastor Joan
Monday-Thursday Mornings
Amanda Bradley (Admin Assistant):
Mondays & Thursdays 8am-noon
Wednesdays as needed
Helping Hands Office Volunteers:
Wednesdays 9:00am-11am (approx)
Megan Savage (Bookkeeper):
Tuesdays & Thursdays 5:30pm

When Pastor is out of town, emergency pastoral care information can be obtained by calling the church office (269/983-1273) or contacting the council president.

Note: Emails for Pastor should be addressed to oleson@saronlutheran.org to ensure privacy. Emails to Amanda and the church office should be sent to info@saronlutheran.org.

Caring and Sharing

IN OUR PRAYERS

Kathleen & Phillip Preston are at Caretel in St. Joseph;
Tom Taylor is at Caretel in St. Joseph;
John Olson is at the Willows in St. Joseph.

Happy Birthday Wishes to Saron's Members!

5/2	John Hoodlebrink
5/3	Brooklyn Huff
5/4	Andrew Fortenbacher
5/6	Charlene Baumgartner
5/9	Dennis Lundgren
5/11	Kelli Christman
5/12	Alexander Maly
5/12	Andrew Stankiewicz
5/13	Jenna Henderson
5/15	Kathie Bradley
5/19	Monica Freemire
5/19	Nora Lewis
5/22	Connor Ashley
5/22	Laura Chaddock
5/23	Adam Bradley
5/24	Elliot Hooper
5/25	Matthew Bradley
5/28	Marlene Cox
5/30	Benjamin Frey
5/31	David Bradley

Happy Anniversary Wishes to Saron's Members!

5/2	Kathleen & Phillip Preston
5/9	Marilyn & Dale Lucy
5/16	Ann & Ted Dosch
5/21	K.T. Alexander & Katie Kroening
5/22	James & Laura Hicks
5/23	Mary Alice & Edward Brunner
5/25	Matthew & Amanda Bradley
5/30	Bob & Mary Kynast

"God's Blessings for a very happy day and year round!"

If there are any omissions from the birthday or anniversary list, or if a date is incorrect, please let us know so we can get it correct in the future!

SYMPATHY

We offer our condolences and prayers to Eloise Moely upon the death of her husband

Don Moely

on March 23, 2023.

God is our refuge and strength.
- Psalm 46:1a

CONGRATULATIONS

We were blessed to welcome an additional ten members to Saron's congregational family on April 23, 2023.

Left to right: Mary Streufert, Doug Wold (not pictured), Evan (not pictured) and Mattias Streufert-Wold; Sandra Cunningham; Carla, Frederico and Marcos Herrmann; Freyja, Andrew, Matilda Danielsky and Laura Brunner.

CONGRATULATIONS

Through the act of Holy Baptism, we welcomed **Freyja Mari** and **Matilda Alice** into God's family on April 23, 2023. Freyja and Matilda are the daughters of Andrew Danielsky & Laura Brunner. Grandparents are Ed & Mary Alice Brunner. Sponsors are Jim Brunner and Victoria Robinson.

FORTIFY & fly

Spring is here and progress on our projects is full steam ahead! Council has signed contracts to move forward with the Roofing & Drainage Upgrade and bids are finally coming in for the Sanctuary & Chancel Flooring/ Accessibility Project. As we receive more details, we'll pass them on to you!

Worship

SENSORY BAGS

As part of extending an unconditional welcome to all, we now have Sensory Bags available for use during worship or at other times when helpful. These bags contain a variety of fidgets that can help someone feel more able to sit quietly and/or focus. We also have noise canceling headphones for those who are sound sensitive. These brightly colored bags can be found in the narthex.

PRAYER GROUP

You are invited to offer your prayer petitions (concerns or thanksgivings) via our attendance cards each Sunday. Requests can also be made confidentially online via a link in our Thursday mailings. You may include as much detail as you wish. Requests are then given to the Monday prayer group. **You are also invited to be part of the Monday group at 11am.** We follow a simple format of morning prayer and insert the petitions and prayers for Saron's ministry and the world. You don't even have to pray aloud, if you would prefer to pray quietly. Most weeks we are done in 30 minutes. If you want to know more about this ministry, please contact Pastor Joan.

ZOOM COFFEE HOUR

We will continue the Wednesday Zoom Coffee Hour at 11am as long as there is interest. All are welcome!

ALTAR FLOWERS

Sponsor a week by using the link in the weekly email or by contacting the church office. Make sure to note any special occasion to be recognized in the bulletin. Flowers are $35 per vase. Checks are payable to Saron with "Flowers" as the memo. Please take them home after the 2nd service to enjoy. **Simply return the vase to Saron.**

FACEBOOK

We often share pictures of Saron's ministry on our Facebook page. We do not put names with the pictures. If you have questions or concerns, please contact Pastor.

Nursery

Nursery service is available during worship. In order to utilize the space most effectively, this option is primarily directed towards our youngest members and guests. For preschoolers that need more physical and/or emotional space, activities are available in the narthex, including clipboards with coloring pages and children's bulletins. **It's vital to embrace family units in all stages and as such, we gladly welcome wiggles and giggles in worship!**

The goal of the nursery Is to provide a safe environment to facilitate a meaningful worship experience for families. We recognize that may not look the same for all and encourage sharing concerns and suggestions.

SUNDAY SCRIPTURE READINGS

As you prepare for worship, you are invited to read and reflect on the Scriptures for the day.

May 7: Fifth Sunday of Easter
Acts 7:55-60
Psalm 31:1-5, 15-16
1 Peter 2:2-10
John 14:1-14

May 14: Sixth Sunday of Easter
Acts 17:22-31
Psalm 66:8-20
1 Peter 3:13-22
John 14:15-21

May 21: Seventh Sunday of Easter
Acts 1:6-14
Psalm 68:1-10, 32-35
1 Peter 4:12-14; 5:6-11
John 17:1-11

May 28: Day of Pentecost
Acts 2:1-21
Psalm 104:24-34
1 Corinthians 12:3b-13
John 20:19-23

Our youth group (middle school and high school kids) will meet after 2nd service on Sunday, April 30 for food and fun! Watch your email for more information on a May gathering. Friends always welcome!

Contact Claudia at Staude.claudia@gmail.com with any questions.

Learning

Saron is a congregation seeking to become more fluent in the first language of faith, the language of Scripture, in order that we might live into our calling as a people renewed, enlivened, empowered and sent by the Word.

SUNDAY LEARNING HOUR

As our program year ends on May 21, watch for opportunities taking place this summer, such as Vacation Bible School and a youth group service project.

The Sunday Learning Hour (9:40am-10:30am) will resume on September 10 with the following options:

- Preschool - Grade 5: Sunday School
- Grades 6-8: Confirmation Classes
- High School - Adult: Adult Forum

THURSDAY MORNING BIBLE STUDY

We continue our study on the book of Proverbs, with the theme "God's Standard or Gold Standard." You are invited to join the discussion on **Thursdays from 9:30-11:00am in the upstairs lounge**. Contact Pastor Joan if you have any questions. This class is open to all interested in attending, for one session or many

TUESDAY EVENING BIBLE STUDY

We continue to read and discuss "Your God is Too Small" by J. B. Phillips. The author writes that the trouble with many of us today is that we have not found a God big enough for our modern needs, that is, we suffer from a limited idea of God. The book explores the ways in which we can find a truly meaningful and constructive God for ourselves, big enough to account for our life experiences and big enough to command our highest admiration and respect. We hope the topic will generate some good discussions and introspection.

We meet **Tuesday evenings at 6 pm** in the upstairs lounge for one hour then adjourn to a local restaurant for food and fellowship. All are welcome!

If you have any questions, feel free to call, text, or email:
Bob Kynast (269-921-2786, bobkynast@gmail.com)
Don Hafer (269-985-3637, hafer.don@gmail.com)

Setting the Captive Free?

Do Justice, love mercy, and walk humbly with your God. (Micah 6:8)

We continue our conversation of what is meant by *justice* in the Bible? Is it a focus on *doing justice* by practicing equity, mercy, inclusion, sharing God's bounty with all and treating others and God's creation with honor? Or, is it meting out judgement and punishment? We see both in Scripture, but which definition is directed more at the individual and which more at governing institutions and, of course, God? When it becomes necessary to mete out justice, how can we still *do justice* to those who are in prison? How can our actions of doing justice to them at that point help *set them free* whether they are still incarcerated or have been released?

American incarceration rates are among the highest in the world with on average, 44% returned to prison after one year of being released and 77% after five years.
What is the difference between us and other countries? What would have to change to achieve better results? At our core, do we even want to? What does God want?

Please join us as we dig into the meaning of *doing justice* in our society and working to set the captive free. Ed Staude is the facilitator of this group.

We meet the first and third Wednesday of each month in the lounge from 7pm to 8:30pm. Bring a friend! All are welcome!

Join us on Sunday, May 7 at 6:30pm in the upstairs lounge for our last session before summer break. "The Violin Conspiracy" by Brendon Slocumb is up for discussion. A black, classical musician on the rise goes on a desperate quest to recover his great-great-grandfather's stolen heirloom violin on the eve of the most prestigious musical competition in the world. We get an underdog hero in the fascinating, cutthroat world of classical music most of us know nothing about. Sound interesting? We will also select the books we will read for 2023-2024. Come help us decide and be a part of the process!

If you want to be on the mailing list to receive all book group information and Zoom links, call Kathy Cowall (269) 428-0354 or kcowall@hotmail.com

Women of the ELCA

DEBORAH CIRCLE

We will meet on **Wednesday, May 10 at 7pm** in the church lounge. Denise will provide Zoom with a link emailed closer to the meeting date. The Bible study lesson will be from the March/April 2023 issue of Gather magazine titled The Ten Commandments: reviving the soul: the sanctity of life and love (commandments 5 & 6), p. 20-27, session three. **A leader is needed for this study.** If interested or have any questions about the meeting or this group, contact Melanie at 269/449-8399.

Hospitality

SUNDAY SNACKS

Who doesn't love a snack during a time of fellowship in the narthex? If you would like to be a Sunday snack host, sign up via the link in our weekly email or call/email the office so Amanda can sign you up. Please plan for 30 to partake. Thank you!

Outreach

NOISY OFFERING

We receive a noisy offering (or those not-so-noisy bills) on the first Sunday of each month. These gifts are sent to ELCA World Hunger.

Thank you for your generous offerings!

PENNIES FOR PATIENTS

Berrien County cancer service

Saron is an official drop-off location for the annual Berrien County Cancer Service fundraiser to support providing in-home skilled nursing and supportive resources at no cost to oncology patients in our community struggling with coverage. There is still time to help! **They will collect our container on May 11.**

BENTON HARBOR SOUP KITCHEN

For I was hungry and you gave me food.
I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink.
I was a stranger and you welcomed me.
Matthew 25:35

On Thursday, March 23rd, Deb Standen, Mary Zylema, Jim Manore, & Kathi Anserello were busy at the Benton Harbor Soup Kitchen preparing dinner for 75 guests. We served sloppy joes, mac & cheese, a banana & cookies. The guests enjoyed cookies baked by Kathi Anserello, Marilyn Lucy, Mary Zylema, & Steve Bell.

If you are able to help with the preparation and serving, or by providing cookies, please use the link in the weekly email or contact Kathie Bradley at 269-921-4665.

Thank you to all who continue to support this ministry with your time, contributions, and prayers.
Joyfully sharing God's love for all!

INCLUSIVITY TASK FORCE

The Inclusivity Task Force is committed to extending a welcome to all. Our congregation adopted the following welcome statement and is a **Reconciling in Christ** church.

As a community of faith who *joyfully shares God's love for all*, we believe our lives and faith are strengthened by diversity. We strive to be a community who welcomes people of every ability, age, citizenship status, ethnicity, gender identity and expression, language, marital status, political perspective, race, and sexual orientation. We are committed to the work of racial equity. Whatever life's circumstance, we openly welcome and value you. We celebrate God's unconditional love and respond joyfully to your presence here. All are welcome. You are welcome.

If you ever have any questions or need clarification on our inclusivity journey, please feel free to call any one of the task force members:

Connor Ashley: cashley1837@outlook.com
Laurel Gacek: 269/470-6062 or mlmg2445@sbcglobal.net
Laura Hicks: 517/930-0579 or lhicks42@gmail.com
Darlene Kiessel: 269/313-4062 or kiessel@me.com
Pr Joan Oleson: 269/983-1273 or oleson@saronlutheran.org

Interfaith Action

Interfaith Action (swmichiganinterfaith.org) is a coalition of over 40 faith communities in Allegan, Berrien, Cass, St. Joseph, and Van Buren Counties. Some members of Saron attend meetings and work with various task force groups. One of the goals of Interfaith Action is to promote understanding and respect for diversity.

Support

The Support Committee meets on the second Tuesday of the month at 8pm via Zoom. Contact Don Hafer with any questions at 269/985-3637.

STOCK DONATIONS

Saron partners with TD Ameritrade, a brokerage firm, to accept stock donations. If you would like to donate stock, email Joe Ulrey at josephulrey@yahoo.com to receive more information. Thanks!

Facilities

HELPING HANDS (Previously Golden Hammers)

We do all sorts of things from building maintenance to preps for worship in the sanctuary to assembling bulletins and newsletters and so much more. We meet on Wednesdays around 9am and know you are invited – whatever your age, gender, or ability. There is a job for you to use your helping hands.

Outdoor Spring Cleanup

Thank you to all those that showed up and put in the work on a chilly Saturday morning to get our grounds in shape for the upcoming (hopefully) warm months!

Save the Date!!!

Celebrate Saron Fortified!

Sunday, June 25

Congratulations! We have accomplished two big milestones that need to be celebrated – we made the last payment on our mortgage for construction of the narthex and are now debt free, and our fund-raising efforts undertaken through the Fortify & Fly campaign have exceeded our goal. Let's have a party!

Construction of the narthex was completed in 2001. The addition to our building gave us a welcoming space to gather before and after services, an additional classroom, bathrooms, and an elevator to provide access to all levels of the building. We have been making mortgage payments for more than 20 years and we are happy to now remove that line item from the budget.

The Fortify & Fly campaign began in 2019 to raise funds to make building repairs and improvements, develop a strong branding for the church, add diversity attractions, and address staffing. A primary goal of $371,165 was pledged and through the years of 2019, 2020, 2021, and 2022 we are happy to report we exceeded that goal! Quite an accomplishment considering in-person services were impacted by the pandemic. Many of the improvements funded by Fortify & Fly are visible, such as the seating in the sanctuary, while others are behind the scenes, such as roof repairs. Others are still to come, including technology improvements for sharing our services online.

Time to give ourselves a pat on the back! We will celebrate these accomplishments on Sunday, June 25 during the church service and afterword with an ice cream social. Save the date, all are welcome!

ENDING HUNGER ONE STEP AT A TIME
CROP HUNGER WALK

LIVE WALK!
Sunday
May 21
2023

Watch for more information!

SARON LUTHERAN CHURCH
510 MAIN STREET
ST. JOSEPH, MI 49085

Website: www.saronlutheran.org
Email:info@saronlutheran.org

A Congregation of:
The North/West Lower Michigan Synod
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

MAY 2023 NEWSLETTER

ALLELUIA!

May 2023

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	1 11am Prayer Group	**2**	**3** 9am Helping Hands 11am Zoom Coffee 7pm Forum & Fellowship	**4** 9:30am Bible Study 6pm Bells Rehearsal 7pm Choir Rehearsal	**5**	**6**
7 8:30am Worship 9:40am Learning Hour 11am Worship and Confirmation with Zoom Option	**8** 11am Prayer Group Synod Assembly	**9** 6pm Bible Study 8pm Support Meeting	**10** 9am Helping Hands 11am Zoom Coffee 7pm Deborah Circle	**11** 9:30am Bible Study 6pm Bells Rehearsal 7pm Choir Rehearsal Pastor On Vacation	**12**	**13** Blossomtime Parade 1pm (food available around noon)
14 8:30am Worship 9:40am Learning Hour 11am Worship with Zoom Option	**15** 11am Prayer Group 7pm Church Council	**16** 6pm Bible Study	**17** 9am Helping Hands NO Zoom Coffee 7pm Forum & Fellowship	**18** 9:30am Bible Study 6pm Bells Rehearsal 7pm Choir Rehearsal **NEWSLETTER ARTICLES DUE**	**19**	**20**
21 8:30am Worship 9:40am Learning Hour 11am Worship with Zoom Option **Crop Walk**	**22** 11am Prayer Group	**23** 6pm Bible Study	**24** 9am Helping Hands 11am Zoom Coffee	**25** 9:30am Bible Study 6pm Bells Rehearsal 7pm Choir Rehearsal **Soup Kitchen Day**	**26**	**27**
28 10am Worship and Senior Recognition with Zoom Option NO Learning Hour **CHANGE TO SUMMER HOURS**	**29** Memorial Day	**30** 6pm Bible Study	**31** 9am Helping Hands 11am Zoom Coffee			